



Smithsonian

Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Fred Becker Papers, circa 1913-2004, bulk 1940-2000, in the Archives of American Art

Ryan Evans

2018 June 20

Archives of American Art
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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives of American Art
Title:	Fred Becker papers
Date:	1913-2004 (bulk 1940-2000)
Identifier:	AAA.beckfred
Creator:	Becker, Fred, 1913-2004
Extent:	3.4 Linear feet
Language:	English .
Summary:	The papers of printmaker and educator Fred Becker measure 3.4 linear feet and date from 1913 to 2004, with the bulk from 1940-2000. The collection documents Becker's work as a professional artist and educator through biographical material, personal and professional correspondence, writings, interviews, personal business records, gallery and exhibition files, project files, photographic material, printed material, and artwork.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Fred Becker papers were donated to the Archives of American Art in 2018 by Becker's daughter Carla Becker.

Processing Information

The collection was processed and a finding aid prepared by Ryan Evans in 2018.

Preferred Citation

Fred Becker papers, 1913-2004, bulk 1940-2000. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

Use of original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C., Research Center. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Fred Becker (1913-2004) was a printmaker and art educator in Amherst, Massachusetts. Becker was born in 1913 in Oakland, California. He attended New York University beginning in 1933, where he enrolled in architecture coursework before focusing on printmaking and drawing. Becker was employed by the Works Progress Administration from 1935 to 1939. His early work of this period often incorporated nightclub scenes depicting jazz musicians. In 1940, Becker was one of the first students to enroll in classes at the New York iteration of Atelier 17, led by printmaker Stanley William Hayter. There Becker engaged with more abstract forms in his art-making, and arrived at an expressionist style by the 1950s. He served in the China Division of the United States Office of War Information (OWI) from 1945 to 1946.

Becker taught at the Taylor School of Art at Temple University in Philadelphia, from 1946 to 1948; at Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, from 1948 to 1968; and at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst from 1968 until his retirement in 1986. University of Massachusetts, Amherst's Herter Gallery was the site of his retrospective in 1999. Becker and his wife, painter Jean Morrison (1917-1995), had two children Carla and Anton. Fred Becker exhibited widely in print annuals and solo shows, as well as in the context of his participation in the Works Progress Administration and Atelier 17, New York. His prints are represented in a number of museum collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Museum of Modern Art, and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York.

Scope and Contents

The papers of printmaker and educator Fred Becker measure 3.4 linear feet and date from 1913 to 2004, with the bulk from 1940 to 2000. The collection documents Becker's work as a professional artist and educator through biographical material, personal and professional correspondence, writings, interviews, personal business records, gallery and exhibition files, project files, photographic material, printed material, and artwork.

Biographical material includes a birth certificate and announcement, résumés and other biographical writings, as well as memorial materials and obituaries. Also included are letters and photographs concerning Becker's WWII appointment with the Office of War Information in China. Correspondence reflects relationships with colleagues and friends including Stanley William Hayter, Gail Singer, and Mona Van Duyn, professional organizations, museums and galleries, as well as family. The Writings series contains essays and artist statements written by Becker, articles and essays written about Becker by others, and writings by poets Ruthven Todd and Mona Van Duyn. Lectures are featured in written form, as well as audio recordings. Interviews include transcripts and audio and video recordings.

Personal business records include various studio artwork inventories and information regarding artwork donation and sale at auction, in addition to documents related to Becker's role as an art instructor. In the gallery and exhibition files are detailed records of gallery and museum exhibitions, as well as correspondence with specific galleries including the Mary Ryan Gallery. Project files include documentation of various residencies and government art programs Becker participated in, a symposium on Atelier 17, as well as significant bodies of work.

Photographic materials document Becker's artwork, including images of works by fellow artists S.W. Hayter and Paul Burlin. Photograph formats include slides, transparencies, negatives, and black and white prints. Printed material includes exhibition catalogs, clippings and invitations. Also found are various artworks including sketchbooks, loose sketches, prints, and a partial letterpress mock-up of *Winter of Artifice*, printed by author Anaïs Nin, with various etching illustrations by Ian Hugo.

Arrangement

The collection is arranged in 10 series:

- Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1913-2004 (0.1 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1940s-2001 (0.7 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 3: Writings, circa 1940s-1993 (0.1 linear feet; Box 1)
- Series 4: Interviews, circa 1976-2004 (0.2 linear feet; Boxes 1-2)
- Series 5: Personal Business Records, circa 1939-1990s (0.1 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 6: Exhibition and Gallery Records, circa 1950-2002 (0.2 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 7: Project Files, circa 1957-1993 (0.1 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 8: Photographic Material, circa 1930s-1999 (0.3 linear feet; Box 2)
- Series 9: Printed Material, circa 1930s-2002 (0.8 linear feet; Boxes 2-3)
- Series 10: Artwork, circa 1940-1989 (0.6 linear feet; Boxes 3-4)

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Artists -- Massachusetts
Printmakers -- Massachusetts
World War, 1939-1945

Types of Materials:

Interviews
Lectures
Photographs
Prints
Sketchbooks
Sketches
Sound recordings
Transcripts
Video recordings

Names:

Atelier 17
Burlin, Paul, 1886-1969
Hayter, Stanley William, 1901-1988
Hugo, Ian, 1898-1985
Mary Ryan Gallery (New York, N.Y.)
Nin, Anaïs, 1903-1977
Singer, Gail
Todd, Ruthven, 1914-1978
United States. Office of War Information
Van Duyn, Mona

Occupations:

Art teachers -- Massachusetts

Container Listing

Series 1: Biographical Material, circa 1913-2004

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Biographical material includes a birth certificate and announcement, resumes and other biographical summaries, as well as memorial materials and obituaries. Also included are letters and photographs concerning Becker's WWII appointment with the Office of War Information in China.

Box 1, Folder 1	Birth Certificate and Announcement, 1913
Box 1, Folder 2	Fairfax High School Diploma and Certificate, 1930, 1931
Box 1, Folder 3	China Assignment, circa 1945 Notes: Includes correspondence with Soong Chi-Ling, Mme. Sun Yat Sen
Box 1, Folder 4	Curriculum Vitae, circa 1950-1999
Box 1, Folder 5	Retirement, circa 1976-1986
Box 1, Folder 6	Who's Who In American Art, circa 1980
Box 1, Folder 7	Driver License, circa 2000
Box 1, Folder 8	Memorial and Obituaries, circa 2004

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Series 2: Correspondence, circa 1940s-2001

0.7 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Correspondence reflects relationships with family, colleagues, and friends including S.W. Hayter, Gail Singer, and Mona Van Duyn, as well as professional organizations, museums, and galleries.

Box 1, Folder 9	A, circa 1960-1993
Box 1, Folder 10	Art Institute of Chicago, 2001
Box 1, Folder 11	B, 1965-1993
Box 1, Folder 12	Barbarian Press, circa 1988-1994
Box 1, Folder 13	Jean Dale Bearce, circa 1990-1991
Box 1, Folder 14	Carla and Jean Becker, circa 1960s
Box 1, Folder 15	Fred and Jean Becker (Wedding Plans), circa 1949
Box 1, Folder 16	Becker Family, circa 1940s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 17	Fred Becker (Letters From), 1993, 1995
Box 1, Folder 18	Robert Blackburn (Printmaking Workshop), circa 1989
Box 1, Folder 19	C, 1962-1986
Box 1, Folder 20	Frances Carey (British Museum), circa 1985-1995
Box 1, Folder 21	Cleveland Museum of Art, 1994
Box 1, Folder 22	D, circa 1962-1989
Box 1, Folder 23	Nancy Dant, circa 1983-1988
Box 1, Folder 24	Mon Van Duyn, circa 1972-2004
Box 1, Folder 25	E, 1963, 1989
Box 1, Folder 26	F, 1962, 1993
Box 1, Folder 27	William Fett, circa 1948-1991
Box 1, Folder 28	Tom Funk, circa 1989
Box 1, Folder 29	John Furbish, circa 1989

Box 1, Folder 30	G, circa 1962-1991
Box 1, Folder 31	Tom Garst, circa 1972-1988
Box 1, Folder 32	Gordon Gilkey, 1958-1992
Box 1, Folder 33	H, 1972, 1993
Box 1, Folder 34	Désirée Hayter, circa 1973-1999
Box 1, Folder 35	Stanley William Hayter, circa 1949-1988
Box 1, Folder 36	Al Hirschfeld, circa 1961-1994
Box 1, Folder 37	Ian Hugo (Hugh Parker Guiler), circa 1948-1982
Box 1, Folder 38	J, 1977
Box 1, Folder 39	Dorothy Jeakins, circa 1950-1995
Box 1, Folder 40	L, 1963-1972
Box 1, Folder 41	Gold Lewis, circa 1977-1980s
Box 1, Folder 42	M, circa 1953-1981
Box 1, Folder 43	Metropolitan Museum of Art, circa 1986-1987
Box 1, Folder 44	Joann Moser (National Museum of American Art), 1990
Box 1, Folder 45	Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofia, 1999
Box 1, Folder 46	N, 1963-1992
Box 1, Folder 47	University of Notre Dame, circa 1963
Box 1, Folder 48	O, circa 1962-1992
Box 1, Folder 49	P, 1948-1978
Box 1, Folder 50	Penmaen Press, circa 1984-1993
Box 1, Folder 51	R, 1958-1965
Box 1, Folder 52	Krishna Reddy, 1988
Box 1, Folder 53	Paul Ritscher, 1989

Box 1, Folder 54	Bill Roberts, circa 1989-1990
Box 1, Folder 55	Baekland Roll, circa 1961-1994
Box 1, Folder 56	S, circa 1958-1995
Box 1, Folder 57	Gail Singer, circa 1961-1985
Box 1, Folder 58	Syracuse University, circa 1986
Box 1, Folder 59	T, 1977, 1981
Box 1, Folder 60	U, 1961
Box 1, Folder 61	United States Information Agency, circa 1966-1968
Box 1, Folder 62	V, circa 1955-1991
Box 1, Folder 63	W, 1967-1991
Box 1, Folder 64	Washington University, St. Louis, circa 1957-1980
Box 1, Folder 65	James Wechsler (Mary Ryan Gallery), 1991-1993
Box 1, Folder 66	Worcester Art Museum, circa 1989-1993
Box 1, Folder 67	Unidentified Correspondents, First Name Only, circa 1956-1994
Box 1, Folder 68	Holiday Cards, circa 1947-1961
Box 1, Folder 69	Contacts and Addresses, circa 1970s-2000

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Series 3: Writings, circa 1940s-1993

0.1 Linear feet (Box 1)

Scope and Contents: Writings include essays and artist statements written by Becker, articles and essays written about Becker by others, and writings by poets Ruthven Todd and Mona Van Duyn. Lectures are featured in written form, as well as audio.

Box 1, Folder 70	Juror's Statement, 1966
Box 1, Folder 71	"The WPA Federal Art Project, New York City: A Reminiscence", circa 1970s-1980s
Box 1, Folder 72	Statement for Community Art Registry, Amherst, circa 1980s
Box 1, Folder 73	Fred Becker on Gail Singer, circa 1983
Box 1, Folder 74	"A Becker's Dozen", 1983
Box 1, Folder 75	Fred's Tape (Art-Making Topics), circa 1980s-1990s Includes 1 sound cassette
Box 1, Folder 76	Poetry by Ruthven Todd, circa 1940s-1950s
Box 1, Folder 77	Poetry by Mona Van Duyn, circa 1950s-1970s
Box 1, Folder 78	"Atelier 17 and the New York Avant-Garde 1940-1955" Typescript of Lecture by Sue Fuller, 1993

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Series 4: Interviews, circa 1976-2004

0.2 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Scope and Contents: The Interviews series features interviews in written form, as well as audio and video recordings.

Box 1, Folder 79	Fred Becker and P. Rubin, Tuscon, AZ (Dec. 1976), circa 1976 1 Sound cassette
Box 1, Folder 80	Campus Center Interview (Aug. 1989), circa 1989 1 Videocassettes (VHS)
Box 2, Folder 1	"Recollections of Atelier 17: In Conversation with Martha Sawin" (May 1999), circa 1999
Box 2, Folder 2	Fred Becker Interview, circa 2002-2003 1 Sound cassette
Box 2, Folder 3	Biographical Interview, Summarized by Lanie Delphin, circa 2003-2004

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Series 5: Personal Business Records, circa 1939-1990s

0.1 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Personal business records include various studio artwork inventories and information regarding artwork donation and sale at auction, in addition to documents related to Becker's role as an art instructor.

Box 2, Folder 4	Inventories and Consignments, circa 1939-1989
Box 2, Folder 5	Studio Notes, circa 1940s-1970s
Box 2, Folder 6	Teaching Evaluations and Letters of Recommendation, circa 1966-1992
Box 2, Folder 7	Museum Gifts, circa 1980s-1990s
Box 2, Folder 8	Sotheby's Sales, circa 1990-1992
Box 2, Folder 9	WPA Prints at Newark Museum, circa 1990s

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Series 6: Exhibition and Gallery Records, circa 1950-2002

0.2 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: The gallery and exhibition records include detailed documentation on gallery and museum exhibitions, as well as correspondence with specific galleries including the Mary Ryan Gallery.

Box 2, Folder 10	General Exhibitions, circa 1950-2004
Box 2, Folder 11	Mary Ryan Gallery, circa 1982-1993
Box 2, Folder 12	Prints St. Louis Artists Guild (Apr. 1964), circa 1964
Box 2, Folder 13	Fred Becker, Jerry Kearns, Jean Morrison Cornell Gallery (Oct. - Nov. 1985), circa 1985
Box 2, Folder 14	In Pursuit of Abstraction: American Prints 1930-1950 Whitney Museum of American Art (Mar. - May 1986), circa 1986
Box 2, Folder 15	Portrait of the Nation U.S. Customs House (June 1987), circa 1987
Box 2, Folder 16	Gravures Newyorkaises 1940-1950 J.C. Riedel (Nov. - Dec. 1989), circa 1989
Box 2, Folder 17	Fred Becker: Master Printmaker Molloy College Art Gallery (Nov. - Dec. 1999), circa 1999-2002
Box 2, Folder 18-19	Dynamic Range: The Prints of Fred Becker Arts Atrium Gallery (Feb. 2002), circa 2002 Includes 1 videocassette (VHS)
Box 2, Folder 20	Motifs and Meanings: The Works of Fred Becker (Dec. 2002-Mar. 2003), circa 2002

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Series 7: Project Files, circa 1957-1993

0.1 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Project files include documentation on various residencies and government art programs Becker participated in, as well as significant bodies of work and special projects.

Box 2, Folder 21	John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation Scholarship, circa 1957-1963
Box 2, Folder 22	Art in the Embassies Program, U.S. Department of State, 1968-1970
Box 2, Folder 23	National Endowment of the Arts Printmaking Fellowship, circa 1974-1975
Box 2, Folder 24	Miro Prints, circa 1947, 1974
Box 2, Folder 25	William Blake Prints, circa 1974
Box 2, Folder 26	Hooks and Eyes Prints, circa 1990
Box 2, Folder 27	Atelier 17 Symposium, Pollock-Krasner House and Study Center, circa 1993

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Series 8: Photographic Material, circa 1930s-1999

0.3 Linear feet (Box 2)

Scope and Contents: Photographic materials document Becker's artwork and include images in the studio, as well as images of works by fellow artists S.W. Hayter and Paul Burlin. Photograph formats include slides, transparencies, negatives, and black and white prints.

Box 2, Folder 28	Photographs of the Artist, circa 1930s-1970s
Box 2, Folder 29	Artist in Studio, Transparencies, circa 1950s-1960s
Box 2, Folder 30	Washington University, St. Louis, circa 1948-1955
Box 2, Folder 31-32	Artwork Images, circa 1933-1990s
Box 2, Folder 33-34	WPA Prints, circa 1940s-1950s
Box 2, Folder 35	Atelier 17 and S.W. Hayter, circa 1940s-1950s
Box 2, Folder 36	Burlin and S.W. Hayter, circa 1950s
Box 2, Folder 37	Mexico 1950, circa 1950
Box 2, Folder 38	Yaddo, Saratoga Springs, 1954
Box 2, Folder 39	Print Show S.C., circa 1940s-1960s
Box 2, Folder 40	Artwork and Studio, Slides, circa 1960s-1990s
Box 2, Folder 41	Artwork Slides (1930s-1940s), circa 1990s
Box 2, Folder 42	Artwork Slides (1950s-1960s), circa 1990s
Box 2, Folder 43	Artwork Slides (1970s-1990s), circa 1990s
Box 2, Folder 44-45	Artwork Slides, circa 1990s
Box 2, Folder 46	U. Mass. Amherst Retrospective (1999), circa 1999

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Series 9: Printed Material, circa 1930s-2002

0.8 Linear feet (Boxes 2-3)

Scope and Contents: Printed material includes exhibition catalogs, clippings and invitations related to Becker's career, as well as concerning other artists.

Box 2, Folder 47	American Prints Today Catalogs, 1959, 1962
Box 2, Folder 48	Aterlier 17, circa 1943-1986
Box 2, Folder 49	Between the Image and the Word, (Illustrated by Fred Becker) Promotional Materials, circa 1959
Box 2, Folder 50	Clippings Regarding Fred Becker, circa 1951-1999
Box 2, Folder 51	Clippings, Newsprint Cartoons by Fred Becker, circa 1930-1932
Box 2, Folder 52	Clippings, Retrospective Exhibition at The Bitten End Gallery (Apr. 1975), circa 1975
Box 2, Folder 53	Clippings Scrapbook, circa 1955-1964
Box 2, Folder 54	Clippings, Miscellaneous, circa 1960s-1990s
Box 2, Folder 55	Fred Conway, 1948, 1986
Box 3, Folder 1-4	Exhibition Catalogs, circa 1947-1991
Box 3, Folder 5	S.W. Hayter, circa 1958-1988
Box 3, Folder 6-7	Invitations and Pamphlets (Fred Becker Exhibitions), circa 1940s-2002
Box 3, Folder 8	Reflections, Washington University Student Review No. 1-2, 1952, 1953
Box 3, Folder 9-10	S.A.G.A. Annual Print Exhibition, 1962-1979
Box 3, Folder 11	WPA, circa 1937-1980s
Box 3, Folder 12	Writings on Fred Becker, circa 1960s-1993
Box 3, Folder 13-15	Miscellaneous Printed Material, circa 1952-1980s

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Series 10: Artwork, circa 1940-1989

0.6 Linear feet (Boxes 3-4)

Scope and Contents: Artwork includes sketchbooks, loose sketches, prints, and a partial letterpress mock-up of *Winter of Artifice*, printed by author Anais Nin, with various etching illustrations by Ian Hugo.

Box 3, Folder 16	Drawing of Rewi Alley, 1945
Box 3, Folder 17	Drawings on Paper, circa 1950s-1980s
Box 3, Folder 18	Ex Libris for Washington University Library, St. Louis, circa 1950s
Box 3, Folder 19	Prints, circa 1940s, 1989
Box 3, Folder 20	Prints, William Blake Series, circa 1974
Box 3, Folder 21	Sketchbooks (China), circa 1945
Box 3, Folder 22	Sketches (China), circa 1945
Box 3, Folder 23-24	Miniature Sketchbooks, circa 1940s-1960s
Box 3, Folder 25	Sketchbook, circa 1950
Box 3, Folder 26	Sketchbook (Mexico), circa 1950
Box 3, Folder 27	Sketchbook, circa 1950s
Box 3, Folder 28	Sketchbook, circa 1950s-1960s
Box 3, Folder 29	Sketchbook, circa 1950s-1960s
Box 4, Folder 1	Sketchbook, circa 1967
Box 4, Folder 2	Sketchbook, circa 1970s
Box 4, Folder 3	Sketchbook, circa 1970s
Box 4, Folder 4	Sketchbook, circa 1970s
Box 4, Folder 5-7	Letterpress Mock-up of Anais Nin Book with Etchings by Ian Hugo, circa 1940-1942

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